DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 046 617 RE 003 037

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TITLE Perspective on Reading.
PUB DATE 7 May 70
NOTE 11p.: Invitational address to the conference of the International Reading Association, Anaheim, Cal., May 6-9, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Cognitive Processes, *Educational Attitudes, *Educational Trends, Emotional Development, Individual Differences, Literature Appreciation, *Reading Instruction, *Reading Processes, Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

Reading is a subject about which many people have opinions. Therefore it is necessary for those in the field to determine a perspective through which to examine issues. Such a perspective implies recognizing diverse theories about educational processes and human development and analyzing them, creating a balance among the cognitive and emotional components of reading. To achieve balance involves first accepting the notion that reading is a tool to be learned and then to be used to widen an individual's range of intellectual pursuit. Teachers who are sincerely interested in their work will teach the tool and, more important, will instill in their students an enjoyment of its use. Research into cognitive aspects of reading should provide insights into how the process works which will in turn make teaching the tool more precise and teaching the enjoyment more vital. References are included. (MS)

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PERSPECTIVE ON READING

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Many voices speak to reading today. There is the voice of the humanist Frank Jennings who notes that "Reading begins with wonder at the world about us." There is the voice of the linguistic scholar Kenneth Goodman who describes learning to read as a "linguistic guessing-game." There is the voice of the experimental psychologist who seeks to refine our understanding of such specific aspects of the reading process as cue discrimination, the transferability of specific learnings, or the effect of the placement of questions on reading comprehension. There is the voice of the evaluation specialist who works to convert broad objectives

in reading into more manageable behavior chains to be specifically taught and appraised, often by programed learning techniques. There is the voice of the curriculum theorist whose model of creative human behavior causes him to reject the strong behavioristic emphasis of the evaluation specialist for all but the simpler skills and learnings. And there is the sobering voice of the librarian, Ascheim, who notes the continued and shocking indisposition of the typical American adult to read at a mature level, and wonders if this is not related to the very nature of our highly pragmatic, competitive, albeit "democratic," society.

Note, if you will, the differences implied in the perspectives which these different voices bring to reading. These voices pose the issue in reading to which I would speak today--the relative emphasis we propose to place upon emotionally-rooted values and upon intellectual skills and abilities. In the field of reading, this issue, carrying with it the seeds of conflict, is evident in our debates on early reading, on the nature of reading itself, on methods of teaching reading, on strategies for helping the disabled reader, and even on the meaning and nature of literary appreciation. The issue is apparent in our different conceptions of how students learn, of different styles of teaching, and of teacher education. The issue is present in such disparate matters as our research priorities in reading; on the question of editing or, as some would say, "mutilating" the classics; in our position, actual or implied, on book censorship; and in the practical problem many of us have faced for years in communicating the full implications of what a developmental reading program really means for the staff, the curriculum and the leadership of a school system. I do not suggest that the issue of human values versus human intellect, which is fundamental to our concerns today for the problems of pollution, war, and even higher

education, can be given invariant answers applicable to all times, problems and places. I shall argue, however, that the more nearly we learn to view the processes we call reading as a whole, from a broad, balanced perspective, the more clearly we shall learn to understand how children, youth and even adults learn to read, and how we may help them most constructively so that they may derive emotional as well as intellectual satisfaction from such learning. Perhaps we can then also see more clearly our long-term instructional and research priorities. The balanced perspective which I shall discuss is necessarily oriented to the future to suggest the need for the continuity of the longer view and is deliberately general to provide needed flexibility. The perspective to which I refer has been more conspicuous by its absence than by its presence in reading. The issue, then, is precisely this: should we seek the broader view?

As a point of departure, let us first examine certain current developments and trends in education and then return more specifically to the topic of reading. Consider, for example, the opening statements of Richard M. Jones in his introduction to a group of selected essays entitled Contemporary Educational Psychology. The first section of this volume, oddly enough, is entitled "Perspectives:"

> Contemporary experimental education is proceeding along two converging paths. The first had its theoretical origins in the work of Freud, was directed toward educational research by Lawrence Kubie, and is popularly known as "education in depth." The second had its theoretical origins in the work of Piaget, was directed toward educational research by Jerome Bruner, and is popularly known as "the new curricula." "Education in depth" seeks to enliven the educative process from inside the pupil out, by means of freeing his emotions and fantasies for service in his schoolwork; "the new curricula" seeks to enliven the educative process from outside the pupil in, by means of streamlining the challenges that are carried to the intellect by classroom exercises and materials.

In developing the thesis that we may work with students primarily from the inside out or the outside in but that these instructional emphases will move

toward some kind of resolution, Jones has included essays ranging from that by Loren Eisely on "Man: the Lethal Factor," to others representing a "systems" approach to education, and to still others describing the experience of classroom teachers in their attempts to free the creative potentials of their students. It is instructive to note that Eiseley's strongly-voiced ecological concern was stated in 1962, clearly anticipating our belatedly awakened consciousness of man's mismanagement of his environment.

While I would agree with Jones that we may approach students differently in our work and likewise do so differently at different ages and for different tasks, but hopefully find a happy resolution of these emphases, I would also argue that the nature of this resolution is also critical. That is to say, whatever resolution we make of this or any other conflicting situation will depend, inescapably, upon the values we believe in, live by, and teach by. To this I would add another crucial factor: our perspective will vary depending upon the extent to which it is rooted in the past, is cognizant of the present, and is anticipatory of the future. I would particularly stress the importance of our perception of the present and the future in this perspective. It has been observed that the only certainty today is the certainty of change. In this connection, the anthropologist, Margaret Mead, in her recent study of the present younger generation explicitly argues that the motivations and experiences of youth today are different from that of any previous generation on earth; that, to them, "History is now." Call this McCluhanism if you will; reject this assumption as merely pleading a popular cause if you will. Yet as I have worked with children in schools and clinics, have watched my children and their friends grow up, and especially as I have worked with undergraduates in recent years, I would regard Margaret Mead's perspective as the sober

analysis of a responsible social scientist. Certainly the values and aspirations of the youth of my generation were decidedly different from those of youth today. I commend the latter to you--warmly. Such acceptance of some youth today may be difficult for some of us and even for some of their own peer groups if form is mistaken for substance. For example, a former colleague of mine who lived for several months in a "Hippie" culture was asked some time ago by a rather provincial, middle-class group of students to explain the concept of "Hippie." His reply was that the fundamental motive of the true Hippie, as distinguished from the Hippie fringe, was "to out-Christian the Christian." He also added that from the true Hippie he learned to accept and to be better accepted by his own children. As you might expect, these statements evoked reactions ranging from mild dismay to outright incredulity in the class.

Acceptance--the acceptant personality. This is one of the touchstones of the thinking which Rogers, Maslow, May and others of the existential school bring from psychotherapy to education. Here, too, the emphasis is upon the present, upon the potentialities which the student now possesses, and which, if explored in an atmosphere of mutual trust and encouragment, may be unleashed for self-development. Their emphasis "on becoming," on the supportive quality of the student-teacher interaction, and on self-directed learning is quite different in terms of its depth, scope and pervasiveness in the educational process than, for example, is usually treated in discussions of applying principles of motivation, especially that of "rapport," to work with the problem reader. I suspect that when Betts many years ago suggested that such work begin immediately upon an obvious difficulty of the reader and that background data might well be gathered later in connection with this process, he was at least intuitively aware of the importance of establishing and maintaining a favorable inter-personal

relationship with the student from the outset. The general principle of acceptance takes many forms. It is to be found in the enthralling experiences of Sylvia Ashton-Warner's Teacher; in the "self-fulfilling prophecy" concept with which Rosenthal and Jacobson have experimented; in Moustakas' descriptions of "authentic" teachers in action; in the work of the teachers of problem children so graphically described in George Dennison's Lives of Children; in the Summerhill concept; and in the recent description of the emerging British philosophy of primary education in the collection of papers by Vincent Rogers entitled Teaching in The British Primary School. Many other persons and schools could be mentioned that share a concern for personal and social values that demand a different focus and pace than is typically found in an other-centered learning-teaching process. As one primary teacher recently put the matter when queried about how she and other colleagues who had never really worked together before on an in-service project finally succeeded in planning and conducting a preventive reading program: "It took a smile."

Other-centeredness is prominent in American life and education. We see it in the human consequences of our urban sprawls. We see it in the depersonalization accompanying swollen student-teacher ratios in schools that have grown too fast, too large, too complex in organization. We see it as a popular teaching style, particularly at upper levels, for don't standard textbooks often extol the virtues of the lecture achievement-wise, the importance of objectivity in grading, and the deliberate suspension of judgment in rational inquiry? We see it in students who learn the systems and deliberately become uninvolved personally either to win with it or to defy it. We see it in the eruption of knowledge in the tons of printed matter streaming from our printing presses for which we have developed

elaborate retrieval systems in our attempt to cope. We see it in the efforts of technology to make materials manageable for learning purposes in an educational scene that is changing so rapidly that new editions, new formats, new programs are the rule, not the exception.

To return to reading. The presence of other-centered and cognitively-oriented factors are prominent in current views of reading. Of particular importance is the impact of the newer technology on reading in such forms as the programed text and in the great variety of instruments being developed to present programed aspects of reading instruction. Since such technological material will undoubtedly increase in use for perfectly rational reasons in the scientific study of reading, it is imperative that both experienced teachers and teachers in training learn to appraise these objectively and use them wisely. Teachers will need to learn more precisely what functions new materials serve in relation to the goals of the total reading program, how and in what sense they may or may not "individualize" instruction, and what is the overall effectiveness of the materials in terms of their learning appeal, the learning sets developed, and their specific retention and transfer value. Hopefully, we may also see in the future significant advances in programed instruction. There is considerable tacit agreement, for example, that the potential of the machine far exceeds the present state of the art of programing. There is need, too, for greater technological versatility in programed instruction to enable the learner not only to select points of entry into given programs but to select program modes and appropriate pacing intervals.

I have tried to sharpen the issue of our perspective on education and to a certain extent on reading from the inside out and from the outside in. Jones believes that at some point these approaches will somehow converge

and be resolved, presumably, into some kind of appropriate balance. Possibly so. But I do not believe this will happen magically. We will do this effectively only if we have vision, only if we have a broad perspective on this issue in reading. If a reasonable balance is to be achieved it will be because our society, our teachers and administrators, our students, and our researchers will it to be so and work hard to achieve it.

What can we do to achieve a better, more reasonable balance on this issue than we have in the past? Perhaps we need first of all to recognize more clearly that some sort of balance is implied because of the nature of reading itself. Reading is in the best sense of the word a tool--a tool which one must learn to use but one which through wise use may open untold vistas of emotional and intellectual satisfaction through doors that only the reader can unlock and along paths on which only the reader can adjust his pace. While it is clear that we must continue to work to understand the nature of the reading process and the more refined reading skills characteristic of mature reading, it is equally clear that we must also work as never before to develop favorable attitudes towards reading if it is to be used and valued by a mass media generation. For if we do not, the private, free world of intellectual and emotional satisfaction of the reader will be stifled by the insistent appeal of other mass media.

In teaching students to read, perhaps we can explore with students more of the joys of reading. Perhaps we can place more emphasis upon the unstructured question, more emphasis on a pupil's unique interpretation, more emphasis upon how he relates his reading to his own experience and to his private world of fantasy. Perhaps we can more truly recognize that there are attitudinal as well as purely intellectual components which affect reading readiness at all levels and adjust to these--something that

the British apparently see far more clearly than we Americans in applying Piaget's developmental principles to primary education. Perhaps we can try to understand the full impact of the TV critic Robert Lewis Shayon's reservation about the widely acclaimed TV series, Sesame Street: "A feeling of cognitive competence can contribute to a preschooler's self-esteem, but it never gets to the roots of his attitudes and values and his relationship with others."

In educating a new generation of prospective teachers, perhaps we can help them achieve a happier integration of reading with its sister language arts by tapping and reflecting on the immediacy and uniqueness of their own experiences in communication. Perhaps we can involve these prospective teachers immediately, fully and continuously with students as they learn to read and use language, making our fundamental teaching strategy more one of coming to grips with the problems faced by teacher and student and less one of formal precept. Perhaps we can help them become attuned much more sensitively to the emotional components of the reading task and to their cultivation in all aspects of the language curriculum. Perhaps, too, we can work more along these lines in in-service projects with teachers and school systems.

In the conduct of research in reading, perhaps we can accelerate our investigations of emotional processes and values as they enter into the reading act, are fostered by it, and become such powerful determinants of the real values we attribute to reading in daily life. Perhaps as we mount largely cognitively-oriented research programs in response to the announced national priority on the right to read, and in connection with similar kinds of outcomes with which the National Assessment of reading seems to be largely concerned, we can also mount parallel investigations

into the needs and satisfactions of reading. Perhaps we can broaden the scope and validity of the evaluative processes, both formative and summative, to include greater emphasis upon self-evaluation.

I have argued, in effect, that while both the cognitive and emotional components of reading are needed, the latter have been the most neglected if we are to judge by the reading habits of the products of our schools. I would seriously doubt that we can continue to operate on the assumption, often expressed or implied, that if a child learns to read he will, therefore, enjoy it and use it, nor merely on the assumption that because a classic is a classic it is therefore good for a child. I suggest rather that the emotional needs of children before, during and after learning to read receive far greater recognition than we have often afforded them. For it is in the highly personalized values and attitudes we develop toward reading that we find the most pervasive and enduring transfer effects of the reading act. In the achievement of such goals, the person of the teacher is indeed the catalyst, the crucial variable, not so much because the inconclusive results of certain comparisons of teaching methodologies suggest that this may be the case, but rather because the act of reading is itself a uniquely personal, human enterprise. Let us balance our perspective on reading not only by helping students learn to read but by helping them enjoy such learning and its fruits.

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